

Halting The Police State

by Ray Riegert

"Every physical and bureaucratic element of a police state exists now in this country," Daniel Ellsberg told about 500 people at KPFA's Counterspy '75 Conference last Friday night. "All that remains for that to happen is a President to flip the switch."

The question of how to control the intelligence community, the "fourth branch of the government," as Congressman Ron Dellums called it, was one of the chief topics of the conference, although there was little unanimity in the suggestions. Dan Ellsberg called for a continuation of the House and Senate investigations. "If they vote to close off those hearings, they are in complicity in condemning us to flipping on that switch."

Yet, Dellums, a member of the House intelligence committee said the hearings were "a total and absolute failure."

A former Kissinger aide, Morton Halperin, whose phone was tapped on Kissinger's orders was equally cynical about congressional control. A joint congressional committee, for example, would "mean that a few more people in the Congress would know about and do nothing about covert activities... Congress has neither the will, the determination nor the guts to police the intelligence community -- a joint committee will be nothing more than a fraud." Halperin suggested instead the elimination of secret intelligence budgets, and that violations of agency charters should be subject to criminal prosecution by a special prosecutor.

Many spectators at the conference favored an outright abolition of the intelligence community. Few of the panelists, except for Dellums, however, had the stomach for such a drastic solution. Stating that he was willing to abolish the CIA but not the FBI, former antiwar activist, Tom Hayden, now a senatorial candidate, said "It is the right of people to have a government which will provide them with information about what is going on in the world."

While many panelists debated this question of national reform, others proposed more immediate, less centralized solutions.

Among these was a proposal for creating "security committees" to serve as self defense groups and to gather counter

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David Bruce Bronson, a "converted rightwing person" reading a deposition to the Counterspy '75 conference claiming he had worked for the Intelligence Unit of the SFPD, "to commit burglary, receive stolen property and violate the civil rights and First and Fourth Amendment rights of radical groups." Bronson first confessed his actions in a letter to the Barb in the spring of 1974. A Bay Guardian story about Bronson, largely based on material gathered by Betty Segal, appeared last February. Bronson claims he burglarized the offices of the National Peace Action Coalition, the Downtown Peace Action Coalition and other antiwar groups in San Francisco in 1971 and turned over their records to the SFPD and the FBI. The agencies have since denied Bronson's charges.